United Nations
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

6th
PLENARY MEETING
Wednesday, 28 September 1993
at 10 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. INSANALLY
(Guyana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to apologize for this late start, but, as members know, the Secretary-General and I sometimes have duties of protocol. I do encourage members to maintain their punctuality.

ADDRESS BY MR. ISLAM A. KARIMOV, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

The PRESIDENT: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Islam A. Karimov, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Islam Karimov, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President KARIMOV *(interpretation from Russian)*: May I express my gratitude for the honour of representing for the first time, as Head of State, the independent country of Uzbekistan at the United Nations General Assembly.

We see the United Nations as a unique institution for the discussion and solution of the most urgent issues facing all States and regions and the world community at large. The United Nations is a great symbol of the good will of nations to live in peace and accord has become a clear sign of mankind's spiritual progress. At a time of radical historic transformation and growing interdependency in the modern world, the global role and significance of the United Nations is growing correspondingly as a political instrument for the world in the consideration and solution of common human problems.

Independent Uzbekistan, recognized by all States, has now become a full-fledged member of the United Nations. Embassies of many countries and offices of various international agencies have been opened in the Republic. I am pleased to acknowledge the fruitful activities of the United Nations Office in Uzbekistan, the opening of which was undertaken on the personal initiative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my people and the Government of Uzbekistan, to express sincere gratitude to the United Nations and all its Member States for their recognition and support of my country's independence.

Uzbekistan, with its population of 22 million, constitutes both the geographical and political basis of Central Asia. One of the most ancient world civilizations emerged in the region, and this land was crossed by the Great Silk Road. The history of my people goes back deep into the past, being more than 3,000 years old. Once-prosperous empires and kingdoms in the territory of ancient Turan, Transoxania and Turkistan had a marked impact on the development of world culture.

The cities of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva have been known far and wide since time immemorial and have had trade links stretching from China

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Section, *Room C-178*, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

93-86617 (E)

Distr. GENERAL

A/48/PV.6
5 October 1993

ENGLISH

to Spain and from Europe to the Indian Ocean. These cities were noted for magnificent architectural structures and attracted outstanding thinkers, scholars and artists from all parts of the world. The great Tamerlane turned Samarkand into a capital city of his empire and was famous as a patron of scholars, philosophers, architects, poets and musicians. Spiritual, intellectual and aesthetic values have had a profound effect in shaping the way of life and traditional culture of our people. We are proud of our history and revere the memory of our great ancestors, the thinkers of the East: Al-Bukhari, Al-Termezi, Ahmad Yassavi, Bahaudin Naqshbandi, Al-Kworazmi, Beruni, Avicenna, Nawai, Ulugh Beg and many others who made an invaluable contribution to world civilization.

Having declared its independence, Uzbekistan has now entered an era of spiritual and intellectual renaissance and radical transformation in the economic, political and social spheres. We have embarked on the building of a democratic, lawful and secular society with an open-market economy and a strong system of social welfare. There is consent among the people of Uzbekistan on the need, directions and forms of developing political institutions, and there is now perceptible progress towards democratic transformation. The new Fundamental Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted last December, has been highly received by independent international experts and meets the essential criteria of a democratic constitution while ensuring all human rights and basic freedoms of citizens. Free and contested general elections have been held for Head of State and the Parliament. There is a clear separation of powers in the country, and the multi-party system is gaining strength.

Our people have regained their freedom following more than 100 years of oppression and now have an opportunity to decide their own destiny, develop their culture and bring about their spiritual renaissance. The Republic, inhabited by people of more than 100 nations and nationalities, provides all ethnic groups with broad and equal opportunities for the development of their national cultures, traditions and languages. We are proud that, despite the difficulties of transition, Uzbekistan has been able to preserve political stability, peace and ethnic accord.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a country of great potential, unique natural resources and a promising future. About half of its population is below the age of 18. It is third in the world in cotton production, eighth in gold extraction, tenth in the production of copper and is among the leading nations in deposits of rare metals and strategic raw materials. Uzbekistan possesses huge energy resources and has much more to offer the world market. It has long traditions of craftsmanship, trade, commerce and farming and is a great country for tourism. The Republic has a powerful scientific, intellectual and spiritual potential. Research carried out by our scientists in the fields of mathematics, physics and biology has won renown far beyond the region. But our principal wealth is an open, hard-working, hospitable and proud people noted for its sense of honour and dignity.

Free Uzbekistan has chosen its own path to reforming society and has elaborated its own model for transition to a democratic society and a free market economy. At the same time, we are quite aware that the Republic - which earlier served as a raw-materials appendage of the former Soviet Union, exporting cheap raw materials and importing low-quality finished products - with a hypertrophied economy and devastated environment, can hardly be expected to overcome in a short span of time the situation it has inherited. Given the high birth rate, acute problems of employment and considerable material difficulties, economic and spiritual development can be expected to outstrip political transformation. We must work out a solid legal foundation, educate people in living in a law-abiding society, encourage tolerance of diverse views and opinions and, above all, change the mentality of the people, whose outlook was shaped by the command-administrative and totalitarian-distributive system we lived under for the last 74 years.

Any other approach, or a thoughtless acceleration of events, may lead to conflicts and civil confrontation in many countries of the former socialist camp. As we have seen, such approaches have led to civil confrontation, inter-ethnic clashes and the further proliferation of problems, rather than to their solution, and may discredit the very idea of a free -market economy and democratic reform. This can be seen quite clearly from the examples of those countries that are now going through a very difficult time in their history. It has become evident today that there are no universal models of social and economic development that are equally acceptable to all countries. There seems to remain no marked difference between the orthodox concepts of capitalism and socialism. The need has emerged to shape new and free thinking without ideological indoctrination, which would reveal the entire diversity of the forms and ways for each country's transition to an entirely new condition.

Taking into consideration the concrete situation, mentality and traditions of the Uzbek people, we have proclaimed five basic principles of our reform. First, we

have proclaimed the priority of the economy over politics and the de-ideologization of both domestic and external economic relations. Secondly, we consider that the State needs to play the role of main reformer and initiator of democratic transformation in our Republic during the transition period. Thirdly, we proclaim the preservation of law and order and the supremacy of law. Fourthly, we believe it is of exceptional importance to have a strong social policy protecting the interests of all citizens, especially the neediest and those requiring Government support. Finally, we believe the transition to free-market relations will have to be carried out gradually, on an evolutionary basis. A popular saying in our country goes, "Never destroy the old house before you have built a new one."

Social stability and State security are vital factors in democratic reform. Hardly any other problem can be solved without them. Uzbekistan has steadfastly and consistently supported security and stability in all regions, especially in our own, Central Asia. The specific characteristics of our region and its geopolitical situation are such that negative developments may trigger world-wide instability. Suffice it to say that about 60 million people associated with various - and I stress, various - ethnic and religious groups live in Central Asia. Both nuclear and conventional arms of tremendous destructive force have been accumulated in this region, and any violence may result in disasters of unforeseeable magnitude.

In this connection, one cannot avoid discussing the situation in Tajikistan and on the Tajik-Afghan border. One could argue about the political interests of the parties involved; however, there is no doubt that the bloody conflict in Tajikistan has arisen as a result of the unlawful efforts of one of the sides to seize power through the force of arms and intimidation and maintain it on the basis of continued material and ideological interference from the outside. Thus, numerous political forces and different parts of the population have become involved in this armed conflict. It has been internationalized also because financial and logistical support of anti-government fighting units with military equipment, as well as training centres, were located beyond the borders of Tajikistan.

The Government of Uzbekistan is concerned at the continued conflict in Tajikistan and on the Tajik-Afghan border, primarily because for centuries the peoples of Central Asia have been linked by close economic, spiritual and cultural relations. At the present time, there are in essence no real borders in the classical sense among the countries of the region. That is why any outbreak of conflict for purely geographical reasons may affect the whole region.

We are also concerned at the uncontrolled accumulation of modern arms in huge quantities. Where do they come from, and who is arming the extremists and terrorists? What is the world community doing, and what should it do to prevent the flow of arms into zones of fratricidal conflict? These burning issues, which affect millions of people and entire nations, are awaiting a solution.

The problem of Tajik refugees has become extremely serious as their conflict escalates. Tens of thousands of peaceful people have been compelled to leave their homes. Uzbekistan is sending food products, medicine and other vital necessities to Tajikistan and is encouraging the return of the refugees, and through the United Nations office supports the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the rendering of humanitarian assistance.

Uzbekistan resolutely condemns extremism, terrorism, religious fanaticism and fundamentalism in any form. It is in favour of the peaceful resolution of conflicts by political means, of holding negotiations between opposing parties, and of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, and it is prepared to render further humanitarian assistance to the Tajik people, primarily to refugees returning from Afghanistan. In the early stages of the conflict in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan twice drew the attention of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to the urgent need for thorough consideration of the situation and its settlement within the framework of the United Nations.

We are grateful to the United Nations and to the Secretary-General for their prompt response to the concern we expressed and for their efforts to settle the conflict. We believe that the international community will properly appreciate this contribution to peace. A United Nations mission headed by Mr. Kittani, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, has been working fruitfully in the region. Data collected by the mission have, in our view, provided an opportunity to draw objective conclusions as to the nature and the driving forces of the conflict at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

Nevertheless, there is hardly any basis today on which to talk about sufficient attention being paid to the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border in the light of the current situation in Tajikistan as well as in Afghanistan. We have

not understood the scale and potential of this conflict and its globally devastating consequences. I should like to take this opportunity to appeal to participants in this session of the General Assembly to express their constructive views on ways of solving this problem.

Uzbekistan would welcome the convening of a standing United Nations seminar on security, stability and cooperation in Central Asia. Tashkent, a city with peacemaking traditions, steeped in the spirit of international cooperation and ethnic accord, is prepared to be the venue for this seminar. In accordance with Article 52 of the United Nations Charter, the parties involved could discuss, within the framework of the United Nations seminar, the possibilities of setting up an effective system of regional security in Central Asia.

Such a system could contemplate measures for the preservation and restoration of peace in case of conflicts and wars, including collective sanctions of a diplomatic, financial, economic and other nature against those who today would venture to violate peace and existing borders, and produce recommendations for the United Nations on the establishment of stability and lasting peace in this region.

Uzbekistan supports the idea of a new role for the United Nations as a global institution in safeguarding security on Earth, which was advanced by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in his "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277), which he outlined in the Security Council on 31 January 1992. We invite the Secretary-General to pay a visit to the Central Asian region, including the Republic of Uzbekistan. I am sure that the authority of the United Nations and the Secretary-General will make it possible to prevent the negative development of events in the region.

In "An Agenda for Peace", Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali attaches great importance to preventive diplomacy in today's world, which coincides fully with our own view. From this lofty international rostrum, I wish to call upon the United Nations to strengthen further its peacemaking work, specifically in zones of emerging conflicts.

It must unfortunately be admitted that, in many cases, authoritative international agencies react to conflict situations not when - speaking figuratively - they smell smoke, but only afterwards, when the fire has already flared up and is almost impossible to put out. To prevent the escalation of conflicts, the international community should abandon the role of passive observer it so often plays and instead adopt the stance of an active peacemaker.

It would be expedient in this regard to establish a special group under the United Nations Security Council to analyse and forecast emerging international conflicts for the purpose of rapidly preparing recommendations for the Security Council, other United Nations agencies and the world community so that the necessary measures can be taken.

Current realities in the world today show that the security of one nation cannot be guaranteed at the expense of another State and that regional security can be viewed solely in concert with global security. On this basis, Uzbekistan is in favour of the total abolition of nuclear weapons. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will have to become a more efficient treaty, unrestricted by any time limits. Our Republic will actively participate in preliminary negotiations for the preparation of a conference on the prolongation of this Treaty. Uzbekistan is a staunch supporter of proclaiming Central Asia a nuclear-free zone.

We are firmly determined also to hold negotiations on signing the chemical weapons Convention. Uzbekistan considers that we need international control over the proliferation of chemical and bacteriological weapons in Central Asia.

I should like to draw particular attention, among other top-priority problems, to the question of stepping up our common efforts against narcobusiness. We would like to see a large-scale cooperation in the struggle against this scourge, this white death. It is a secret to no one that a large percentage of the narcotics consumed throughout the world are produced in and transported through Central Asia. Concentration of narcobusiness in a single region alone provides sufficient ground for the world community to focus its efforts on the elimination of this horrible business. Uzbekistan is ready to cooperate in this area with all interested countries and organizations. We would welcome the establishment, under the aegis of the United Nations, of a regional commission on Central Asia for the coordination of joint efforts in the fight against narcobusiness.

We also favour greater United Nations involvement in controlling the environment and preventing global ecological disasters, and we are ready to facilitate the implementation of that noble mission by all available means.

Like so many regions of the planet, Central Asia faces an ecological disaster on an unprecedented scale. First and foremost, there is the tragedy of the Aral Sea. In recent years it has lost two thirds of its volume, its water table has shrunk by half and its shoreline has retreated 80 kilometers, the content of mineral salts has increased fourfold, 2 million hectares of arable land have become desert, and sandstorms range at distances greater than 300 kilometers from it. All this adversely affects the sanitary and health situation in the region. In its ecological and socio-economic consequences, the problem of the Aral Sea, according to United Nations experts, is one of the major calamities of the twentieth century.

The death of the Aral Sea may have unpredictable affects the whole world. We appeal to the world community to render assistance in saving the Aral Sea and the adjoining zone. In light of the global nature of this disaster, Uzbekistan would appreciate the establishment of a United Nations special commission on the Aral Sea which, in coordination with the region's Governments, and through United Nations channels, would attract international resources and opportunities for the solution of this ecological tragedy. As a first step, this commission could hold an international conference under United Nations aegis in Nukus, bordering on the Aral Sea.

Uzbekistan became independent at the end of the cold war. This new epoch requires a new and sober assessment of all problems facing the United Nations and the world community. We are concerned by the growing suspicion between the advanced countries of the North and the developing countries of the South. We regret that the former ideological intolerance between East and West is now being replaced by ethnic and religious intolerance. We are also concerned about the growing trend towards fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism.

In our view, under the circumstances, the United Nations should be the world's principal tool for the prevention of new hotbeds of confrontation which could jeopardize human progress. We believe that urgent and effective measures are now necessary so that a key organ of the United Nations - the Security Council - can adequately reflect the socio-economic, ethno-cultural, religious and spiritual diversity of today's world; its currently conservative structure should be reconsidered.

The world's nations are on the threshold of a new millennium. They want to face a bright, promising future and leave behind the cataclysms of past global ideological confrontation. There is growing conviction that there is no alternative to peace, cooperation and universal security.

What will the future of mankind be like? What kind of new era is opening? Will it succeed in overcoming the heavy legacy of the past? Will it achieve openness and sincerity in inter-State relations, eliminating mutual suspicion, distrust and diktat, particularly the latter? The future of the community of nations depends on the answers to these questions. Uzbekistan is determined to progress steadily towards the achievement of its national objectives, in harmony with the common interests of the world community and the deep democratic processes that characterize the current level of its development. The Uzbek people are aware that hard times still lie ahead but they are assured of a great future in the single family of mankind.

The PRESIDENT: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Islam A. Karimov, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

ADDRESS BY MR. MAHAMANE OUSMANE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE NIGER

The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Mahamane Ousmane, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of the Niger, His Excellency Mr. Mahamane Ousmane, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President OUSMANE (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Niger and its people, I wish to extend my warmest salutations to this distinguished Assembly. It is truly with great pleasure that I am taking part in the general debate of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

As the first democratically elected President of the Niger, I have come to bring members and all the peoples represented here a message of esteem and friendship, goodwill and cooperation from the people of the Niger. I have come to express the pride of the people of the Niger in belonging to the great family of the United Nations. I have come to reassert its powerful and sincere faith in the ideals and principles expressed in the United Nations Charter. I have come to share its anxieties and concerns with members and to state our determination to join with all the members of the Assembly in the efforts to build a better world for present and future generations.

First, however, may I join the speakers who have preceded me in extending to you, Mr. President, our sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

By unanimously giving you the heavy task of guiding its work, the General Assembly pays a well-deserved tribute to your skills and to your country, Guyana, for its invaluable contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to achieve its noble ideals. Of course, I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau, who I am certain will spare no effort to support you in the successful accomplishment of your difficult functions. I also assure you of the full cooperation of the Niger delegation.

To your predecessor, Mr. Stoyan Ganev of Bulgaria, I express the compliments of the Niger delegation for the competence, efficiency and tact with which he presided over the work of the last session.

Finally, I pay a special tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the fresh dynamic he has brought to the United Nations, with a firm commitment to international development, peace and security. This work since his election to the head of the world Organization clearly reflects our concerns. On behalf of Niger, I warmly congratulate him.

From 29 July to 3 November 1991 the active elements of the nation of Niger held a National Supreme Conference, which was a historic opportunity to consider the results of Niger's 30 years of independence and lay the foundations for further efforts to strengthen the cohesiveness and unity of our people and guarantee them the conditions for sustained and harmonious development.

Following that Conference, Niger resolutely set forth on the path of democratization, to build for our people a State of law founded on the principles of pluralist democracy and committed to observing and guaranteeing respect for human rights as defined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1981 African Charter of Human and National Rights.

As a prelude to the democratization process, the people of Niger, by an overwhelming majority, adopted in a referendum on 26 December 1992 the Constitution of the Third Republic, which guarantees the human rights set out in various international instruments and enshrines the separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches. Furthermore, the Constitution contains many other innovative elements, such as providing for the establishment of a high council of communication, an independent administrative body to ensure and guarantee the freedom and independence of the communications media and fair access for political parties, associations and citizens to official means of information and communications.

The Constitution of 26 December 1992 proclaims Niger's commitment to spare no effort to achieve the ideal of African unity, as well as its willingness to cooperate in friendship and equality with all peoples devoted to peace, justice and freedom.

Once the Constitution was adopted the people of Niger went to the polls on 14 February 1993 to elect the 83 Deputies of the National Assembly, the legislative body of the Third Republic. This Assembly is in every way representative of the ethnic diversity of our people and its political points of view. Indeed, through the creation of special districts during the elections, in addition to the regular administrative districts, every ethnic group in Niger is today represented in the National Assembly. The government majority is made up of an alliance of nine political groups, while the opposition is made up of a grouping of three parties holding 33 of the 83 seats in the National Assembly.

The democratization process undertaken by my country was completed by the holding, from 14 to 27 March 1993, of two-stage presidential elections, in which eight political groups took part. The result was that the people of Niger entrusted me with the onerous task of leading them into the future. It is important to note that throughout the process the people of Niger demonstrated great maturity and behaved in an exemplary manner. Tens of thousands participated, travelling great distances and braving the extreme temperatures that are typical of Saharan Africa. They took part in a calm, peaceful and

disciplined manner, always maintaining the very powerful feelings of brotherhood and of belonging to a single nation that unite them. Such conduct, which I am happy to praise once again here, earned the people of Niger the esteem, consideration and respect of the hundreds of international observers from all over the world who monitored the elections and attested to their fairness and openness.

The people of Niger thus made its choice, deciding that democracy would be the framework of its future. This choice is, to be sure, in keeping with the changing times, in keeping with the direction of history. But we know that democratization is a long-term undertaking requiring patience and selflessness. The great democratic nations of today themselves travelled a long road before reaching their current stage of development.

Young nations such as Niger which have firmly chosen this path must overcome many obstacles and difficulties resulting from the weakness of their socio-economic structures and the international environment.

For my country, one of the most important difficulties is the armed rebellion in the north, which poses grave risks to its unity. This inherited situation is in large part caused by the drought in the Sahel, which is making living conditions precarious for its nomadic peoples, who already face a most hostile and arid environment. The situation is a cause of great concern to Niger. Therefore, immediately it took office on 23 April 1993 the new Government knuckled down to finding ways and means to allow a fair and speedy solution to the problem to prevail in peace and brotherly trust.

The Government has been helped in this undertaking by the valuable assistance of friendly countries, to which I extend our sincere thanks and deep gratitude. Thanks to these efforts, on 11 June 1993 the negotiations resulted in a three-month truce which was scrupulously respected by the parties and whose terms were recently renewed. There are encouraging signs of a speedy solution to this problem being found, and we intend to devote the needed energy to it.

From this rostrum dedicated to peace I express the hope that all the sons of the Niger nation will work together to surmount their present difficulties and build a fraternal, democratic and prosperous Niger.

The World Conference on Human Rights held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993 reaffirmed that the right to development is a basic human right. It affirmed that democracy, development and basic human rights are interdependent, reinforcing each other, and it stressed the overriding need to support the process of democratization in developing countries if we wish to ensure its success.

Niger remains convinced that freedom and democracy need water to grow, just as fish need water to swim, and that they need to be buttressed by economic and social progress. Similarly, we are convinced that international peace and security cannot prevail in the world unless we take into account the vast mass of mankind's legitimate yearnings for economic and social progress.

Thus, development is a major challenge for the fledgling democracies. They must give an urgent and compelling reply to the question: how can we maintain and cultivate our faith? That is the ardent question of millions of men and women who went to the ballot box to vote and who, after the euphoria of victory, find themselves confronted with the harsh realities of their lives, the endless problems of survival.

I know that the Assembly has a broad awareness of the countless difficulties that paralyse our peoples in their daily lives and impede their development.

I know that the Assembly is fully informed about the unspeakable hardships our peoples have endured for decades and our thoughts about them. Indeed, for year after year and session after session, we have been constantly seized of such great topics as the deterioration in terms of trade, the buttressing of protectionism, the debt crisis, the continuing deterioration of the environment, the growing shrinkage of public development assistance, population growth, and reforms in structural adjustment.

The listing of those great topics is but an imperfect summary of the fate and the enormous poverty that is the lot of a large portion of mankind.

The economic situation of the African continent provides an edifying example of that state of affairs. Africa has been experiencing a widespread economic crisis of unprecedented severity, the result of a long period of economic recession. For years now, the continent has suffered from this prolonged recession and from a decline in living standards and a breakdown in the social fabric that is so widespread and so deep that many of the benefits gained in the early years of independence have now been irretrievably lost. Today, real *per capita* income has sunk below the 1980 level.

The relationship between investment and gross national product continues to deteriorate. Our economies are marked by budgetary and trade imbalances and large import reductions, aggravated by the drop in the price of raw materials.

According to some estimates, the ability of some countries to repay, based on exports, is diminishing. Thus, the debt-export relationship, which stood at 97 per cent in 1980, fell to 233 per cent in 1985 and stood at approximately 333 per cent in 1992.

In any event, economic indicators give only an incomplete picture of the situation and do not enable us to visualize the consequences of drought, famine and the deterioration of the environment. The slump means that in some regions of Africa the standards of living, which had already been among the world's harshest, have deteriorated even further, reaching levels that are unacceptable for a modern civilization.

Yet the Governments of those countries have recognized their own weaknesses and laid out areas of responsibility. They have courageously undertaken harsh reforms and adopted painful austerity measures for their people aimed at improving their economic and financial environment.

For a number of reasons, these adjustment policies have not produced the expected results. I should point to two of them.

First, there is the inadequacy of financial and material means, which has prevented us from achieving results and consolidating our gains.

Secondly, there is our States' burden of foreign indebtedness, which has reached an intolerable level and which continues to weigh ever more heavily upon them, worsening their economic and social difficulties.

In those circumstances, how can we expect the poor countries to develop?

Underdevelopment is making daily headway, and the list of countries eligible for the soft conditions of the International Development Association is growing.

For that reason, from this rostrum Niger is calling upon the developed countries to give proof of greater solidarity by agreeing to a blanket cancellation of the debt of the least-developed countries.

Niger had hoped to hear of this decision following the meeting of the Group of 7, but, unfortunately, the seven most-industrialized countries did not move to improve the repayment abilities of the debtor countries.

Hence, we must curb this development, which has a negative impact on our countries. We must find ways and means to reverse present trends. We must act in order to restore hope to Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Niger earnestly hopes that the first Copenhagen summit on social development will not be another meeting with no follow-up.

Similarly, the international conference on population and development planned for 1994 should provide an opportunity for rich and poor to join efforts against hunger and malnutrition.

Closer to home, in a few days an international conference on African development will be held on the initiative of the Government of Japan. Niger hopes that that meeting will come up with the necessary radical measures to solve the problems of the African continent.

The world is now enjoying one of those propitious moments for peace that history occasionally provides us. Prospects today enable us to hope for a better future.

The end of East-West antagonism has given rise to a powerful movement towards peace and has simultaneously awakened great hopes for sustainable development.

Disarmament, as set forth in the United Nations Charter, must entail a system of collective security designed to avoid any excessive stockpiling of weapons. Indeed, it is of primary importance to establish confidence between neighbouring countries that share a similar destiny owing to the many ties joining their respective populations. It is also essential that States without weapons of mass destruction have guarantees that their territories will never serve as testing grounds. We believe it is essential that the resources thus freed be devoted to eradicating poverty, which still, at the end of the twentieth century, is creating conditions of shocking poverty intolerable to the human conscience.

Another ground for hope is the recent United Nations Conference on Human Rights, which has declared the right to development to be a universal and inalienable right, an integral part of fundamental human rights.

Hope was also created by the last Rio summit meeting, which focussed world attention on the threats to our environment, highlighted the existing interrelationship of development and the environment and thereby stressed the overriding need to ensure its preservation in the interests of present and future generations.

Pledges to finance the programmes of Agenda 21 have already been recorded. Niger hopes that the fine hopes awakened in Rio will very soon be translated into concrete actions. That is why we welcome the creation of operational machinery such as the Commission on Sustainable Development and the intergovernmental committee to draft an international convention on desertification and drought. Niger, which has had to deal with the galloping and frightening encroachment of the desert, is following with close interest the work of this committee.

I have spoken at length about Niger and about our concerns and our hopes. However, I should not like to give the impression that the great problems of the world are matters of indifference to us. Notwithstanding the difficult times through which we are passing, Niger is attentive to what is going on in the rest of the world. We are encouraged by developments in the situation in South Africa, and we were relieved to hear the announcement that the first free, democratic elections there would be held on 27 April 1994. In this regard, we join in the appeal of our brother Nelson Mandela that the international sanctions imposed on South Africa be lifted. We believe that the adoption of such a measure would help to create in that country the atmosphere of détente and trust that is necessary if the emergence of a multiracial, egalitarian and democratic society is to be promoted. This would lead to South Africa's entry into the African arena and its return to the concert of the civilized nations of the world.

It was with real relief that we received the results of the Geneva negotiations between the various parties to the conflict in Liberia, which led to the signing of the Cotonou agreements in Benin. This outcome suggests that peace is beginning to return to that country. Niger supports action by the Economic Community of West African States with a view to securing respect for these agreements by all the parties concerned.

We also welcome the talks in El Ayoun on Western Sahara. These talks open up new prospects for a final settlement of this conflict, which has lasted far too long.

Now more than ever before, other regions of the African continent require our close attention and action. This is true of Angola, Mozambique and Somalia. Representatives may rest assured that Niger unreservedly supports all Security Council resolutions that promote the return of peace to this long-suffering country.

I wish now to praise Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali's dynamic work towards elimination of the numerous sources of tension and conflict in Africa and in the world at large. We wish to thank him, in particular, for the insights and thoughts contained in the report entitled "An Agenda for Peace". We have familiarized ourselves with the many wise proposals that the Secretary-General has put forward in that document. In particular, we share his views regarding preventive diplomacy. It was in this spirit that the Organization of African Unity, at its 29th summit meeting in Cairo, equipped itself with machinery for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa.

Away from the African continent, we welcome the signing by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, on 13 September 1993 in Washington, of the agreements on mutual recognition and on autonomy for the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

We hope that the momentum for peace that is beginning in certain parts of the world will move to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has suffered far too long.

It is on this hopeful note that I shall conclude my statement. But first I should like, on behalf of Niger, to welcome the arrival in the great family of nations of Eritrea, the Principality of Monaco, the Principality of Andorra, the Czech Republic, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Slovak Republic. Their presence among us strengthens the universality of the United Nations and testifies to the value of the Organization's action in support of the widespread progress of mankind.

The PRESIDENT *(interpretation from French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Niger for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahamane Ousmane, President of the Republic of Niger, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

AGENDA ITEM 9 *(continued)*

GENERAL DEBATE

Mr. CLAES (Belgium) *(interpretation from French)*: I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States.

Allow me, first of all, Mr. President, to pay a tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Stoyan Ganev, who conducted the General Assembly's proceedings during its forty-seventh session.

The Assembly has unanimously decided to entrust to you, Sir, the conduct of this the forty-eighth session. We welcome that decision as we are familiar with your personal qualities and your professional experience. We also see this as a well-earned tribute to your country, the Republic of Guyana, and to the contribution made by the Caribbean region to the activities of our Organization. The European Community and its member States, which continue to enjoy fruitful relations with the countries of the Caribbean, within the dynamic framework of the Lomé Convention, assure you of their fullest cooperation.

We welcome also the admission to our Organization of the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Eritrea, the Principality of Monaco, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Principality of Andorra.

In his address to the Assembly last year, my British colleague, Mr. Douglas Hurd, made the point that, after a brief interlude of optimism, the world had entered a period of instability and of challenges to law and order. This trend has increased over the past 12 months. We now have to cope with new crisis situations, while - speaking only about Europe - a just and lasting solution to such a long-standing problem as that of Cyprus has yet to be found, despite the continued efforts of our Organization.

Long restrained by the so-called balance of terror, latent antagonisms have resurfaced in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The collapse of the old institutional frameworks has led to the emergence of forms of rapidly competing nationalisms. The personal ambitions of certain rulers and the propaganda machines they control have plunged clans or whole peoples into conflicts marked by the blind use of violence. In that process, the basic rights of the individual and the elementary rules of international humanitarian law have been constantly flouted.

In other countries, the economic and social crisis has continued to provide fertile ground for religious fundamentalism, enabling it to increase the number both of its followers and of its victims. Elsewhere, the existence of a large immigrant population has served as a pretext for reactions of racial intolerance, which have even led to deliberate criminal acts. All these forms of fanaticism designate human beings as the enemy to be destroyed. They must be fought not only through political declarations and laws but also through a more sincere and committed engagement in favour of the human values which should unite us all across continents and cultures.

The proliferation of these situations has gone hand in hand with a growing desire to possess weapons of mass destruction. In this connection, we are concerned by the actions of Member States of our Organization which have ample resources, bear regional responsibilities and claim to be lovers of peace. The proliferation of these weapons represents a grave threat to both global and regional security and stability. It is of the utmost importance that the Non-Proliferation Treaty should be unconditionally extended in 1995 for an indefinite period.

Economic underdevelopment and the unacceptable living conditions of hundreds of millions of inhabitants of the planet constitute another major concern for the European Community and its member States.

The outcome of three decades of development cooperation cannot be regarded as positive. This means that all of us, countries of the South and of the North, must take serious stock of the situation. We know that it is pointless to speak of peace in the world if we do not at the same time work towards global economic and social development. The forthcoming world conferences in Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing will be important landmarks in this process.

Our concerns have not blinded us to the important efforts undertaken in all regions of the world towards democratization and economic recovery.

The Republics which made up the former Soviet Union have pursued the immense task of creating a political, economic and social framework designed to strengthen their sense of identity as individual nations. We must help these countries find ways of achieving deep-

rooted national reconciliation while fully respecting each other's territorial integrity. The European Community and its member States will continue to support them substantially through technical assistance and partnership agreements. They will also maintain their trade with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular through new or strengthened association agreements.

The European Community and its member States support President Yeltsin in his efforts to promote economic and political reform as well as to strengthen democracy in his country.

It is in Africa that the gap between objectives and realities remains most discouraging. Two hundred million people across that continent live in abject poverty. However, in spite of armed conflicts and acute economic problems, there are undeniable signs of the dawn of a new political era. It is of course up to the African people to determine the pace and practical form of their democratic development. Some dictators, however, are still clinging to the power they have long exercised for their own exclusive benefit. Their armies, for whose services they somehow manage to pay, are like a weapon permanently aimed at their own people. Despite appearances, they are now no more than an anachronistic element of underdevelopment.

South Africa is approaching the historic moment when the democratic majority of its people will accede to power. The path leading to this has, alas, been littered with further massacres and attacks. The European Community and its member States reiterate their support for the negotiating process pursued by President Frederik De Klerk and Mr. Nelson Mandela and appeal to the international community to assist South Africa in this crucial phase by helping to organize elections and to rebuild and develop the country.

In Asia, the positive trend of the past few years has been maintained. On the economic front, the Asian countries of the Pacific Rim, particularly China, are characterized by remarkable dynamism. The European Community and its member States hope that this progress will swiftly bear positive results for the living and working conditions of their populations.

Latin America is a continent at peace, continuing its economic recovery in accordance with the objectives of democratically elected Governments. In several of these countries, rapid population growth, social imbalances and drug-trafficking are, however, still a considerable handicap in the march towards progress.

More attention has been paid by the authorities to the indigenous peoples, but certain tragic events have occurred to remind us of the precarious conditions in which those peoples live.

The European Community and its member States welcome the substantially improved prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East. They hope that following the recent Israeli-Palestinian agreements new decisive steps will be taken by Israel and the Arab countries directly concerned in the Middle East peace process. The recent Israeli-Jordanian declaration of principles is a positive move in this direction. We call upon this Assembly to take account of these major developments when considering the situation in the Middle East.

The European Community and its member States, in keeping with their long-standing position, stand ready to assume, in close coordination with the competent international institutions, an important part in the general coordination of the assistance offered by the international community to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. In this connection donor countries will, above all, have to be guided by criteria of efficiency and speed.

During this difficult period the United Nations has not been merely a passive onlooker.

The World Conference on Human Rights made it possible to adopt a Final Declaration which reaffirms and enriches the universal consensus on the essential respect due in all circumstances to the human person. The Vienna Programme of Action provides for a large number of measures to ensure greater respect for, and promotion of, such rights throughout the world. The European Community and its member States will endeavour, from the present session, to achieve application of these measures, in particular as regards increased resources for the Centre for Human Rights and the appointment of a United Nations high commissioner for human rights.

Active preparations have continued for other world conferences, on population, social development and the promotion of women. The follow-up to Rio was ensured by the first meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which, from the outset, established a relation of partnership, which we consider to be highly promising.

The "Agenda for Peace" has been discussed in various bodies. The warm welcome it has received has been followed by various practical measures of implementation. We would, however, like our Assembly to show more

willingness to abandon its reservations regarding certain types of preventive action which have already been adopted in practice by the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

The Organization itself has embarked on and made progress with a series of restructuring measures. The most complex is probably the restructuring of the Security Council, but it is encouraging that this topic is now the subject of open dialogue.

Pending a reform which would not compromise its efficiency, the Council has kept up the pace of its activities. It has given a larger place in practice to the concepts of preventive diplomacy and cooperation with regional organizations. The Secretary-General has resolutely backed this trend both through his numerous visits on the ground or those of his personal representatives and through the adjustments he has made within the Secretariat. These have focused particularly on strengthening the departments responsible for managing peace-keeping operations. The indispensable extension of these services has not yet been completed and will require further assistance from the Member States. Indeed, there has been an overwhelming increase in the United Nations operations in this area over the last few years. They have not simply multiplied: their objectives have also diversified. In several cases, the traditional task of peace-keeping has had to be supplemented or, initially, replaced by the much more delicate task of restoring peace.

The Organization has, in the eyes of some, met with failure in the very difficult situations with which it has had to cope in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. The duplicity of some warlords constitutes a permanent threat of destabilization.

But, in no circumstances has the international community chosen to combine humanitarian-aid missions with peace-restoring missions. The use of force has been seen only as a last resort in order to come to the help of people held hostage by self-proclaimed leaders. Our Organization has consequently been constrained to use, under certain circumstances, means corresponding to the provocations it has had to face. We must, however, draw lessons from the experience acquired through these various operations.

The breadth and complexity of humanitarian crises throughout the world also require greater coordination of humanitarian assistance both during strategic planning of operations and during their implementation on the ground.

The spirit of perseverance, in compliance with the Charter and human rights, is more necessary than ever. It enabled Cambodia to implement the Paris Agreements in conditions which proved to be very difficult - as indeed they had promised to be. This represents a great victory for the Cambodian people as well as a remarkable success for the United Nations, and was achieved through unprecedented effort: by numerous Governments, by thousands of officials and volunteers, and also by large numbers of soldiers, dozens of whom sacrificed their lives. The European Community and its member States pay tribute to the "Blue Helmets" who, frequently killed in cold blood, have been victims of their duty throughout the world. Their safety, as well as that of all United Nations staff, must be improved and the pursuit of their aggressors must be organized more effectively.

The European Community and its member States are also convinced of the need to react to the consequences of the presence of mines resulting from armed conflicts. These devices claim numerous victims every year amongst the civilian population and jeopardize the rehabilitation of vast areas of territory ravaged by war. We ask this Assembly to consider the draft resolution which we have submitted on this subject with a view to a more systematic and effective organization of assistance in mine-clearing. We also welcome the French initiative of asking the United Nations Secretary-General to convene a conference to review the 1981 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

Thus, the overall picture of activities by the United Nations and its Members during the last 12 months is far from disappointing, and I could have listed many other positive developments. However, when we consider the difficulties facing us, it is hard to claim categorically that, whatever happens, the United Nations will be able to meet the challenges of the future effectively.

The Secretariat's capacities are being used to the full; they are no longer sufficient to deal with Member States' wishes in every case. The Organization's coffers are empty or virtually so. The development of new activities is hampered more and more often by disagreements about the allocation of costs. Most of the major contributors, who are seriously affected in their own countries by an unfavourable economic situation, regard strict budgetary restraint as more important than ever. The cost of peace-keeping operations alone will be $3.6 billion for 1993.

In addition to the immediate cash-flow problems, there is an increasing structural deficit in the balance between the ability to take multilateral action and ever-increasing requests for intervention. What can we do to ensure that the United Nations does not fall victim to its own success? We feel that finding a solution entails three areas of action.

First, of course, all Member States must pay their contributions fully and in a timely manner. That is a fundamental obligation with which the European Community and its member States never fail to comply. The effort this requires is neither more nor less than that demanded of other contributors, be they "big" or "small", for each Member State is required to make a contribution in line with its ability to pay. Failure to pay represents a serious breach of the commitments entered into, and it is all the more regrettable that certain defaulting countries at the same time lay claim to a privileged role in the Organization's debates and decisions.

Secondly, the various reforms undertaken in order to improve the operational efficiency of the Organization have to be pursued with a maximum of determination. We have in mind in particular the management of the Secretariat, the control of its expenditures and the forthcoming restructuring in the economic and social sector. It is unacceptable that the objectives set could not be met owing to interminable negotiations or power struggles between senior administrators.

Thirdly, although the United Nations remains an intergovernmental body, it is called upon more and more frequently to fulfil a central government task, with responsibility for solving each and every problem that may arise.

In order to cope with this growing tide of demands, the Secretary-General in his "Agenda for Peace" has quite rightly stressed the need for cooperation with regional organizations and arrangements.

But are they ready? Do they exist everywhere? Does the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations offer real prospects if the latter do not become effective centres of decision and action? We feel that, without the capacity for swift and ongoing intervention on a regional scale, preventive diplomacy by our Organization is a resource which is undoubtedly indispensable but of limited scope. It will indeed facilitate successes here and there, but will be insufficient to come to grips with the most deep-rooted and most threatening antagonisms. If nothing changes, the danger of entire countries imploding is real. The situation will channel multilateral resources more and more into makeshift rescue and rehabilitation operations, to the detriment of collective sustainable development objectives.

In this connection the positive effects of an area of stability such as the European Community no longer need to be demonstrated. The European Community was inspired at the start by a profound desire for peacemaking and reconstruction. The same needs and aspirations are to be found elsewhere in the world but have not been matched by a comparable response.

We believe that there is no alternative to the establishment of such areas in every continent. The resolute pursuit of regional economic integration is a decisive and indispensable step in that direction. The benefits of economies of scale and the free movement of persons and goods then contribute as much to consolidating peace as to sharing prosperity. By uniting to form centres of stability and progress, the participating countries gradually free themselves of the mounting problems and crises which, at this time of tremendous change, tend to be more than they can cope with on their own.

In addition to these areas of stability, it is also necessary to create or strengthen broader regional mechanisms, making it possible for a number of subregions to develop principles of peaceful and prosperous coexistence. Here, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe can serve, if not as a universal model, at least as a source of inspiration. Even if its ability to intervene directly is limited, it constitutes an indispensable platform for dialogue. When internal or bilateral crises occur, it encourages the neighbouring countries to show moderation and thus contributes to limiting the conflict. As respect for common rules grows, more concrete collective actions can be envisaged.

These are the essential tools for achieving the threefold objective which the Secretary-General recommends in his latest report on the activities of the Organization: peace, development and democracy.

Already 32 years ago, a young Egyptian jurist declared at the Academy of International Law:

> "To encourage assemblies of States in a world that is becoming more and more Balkanized, to play the role of *bringing peoples together* and to

> offer massive and constant aid to underdeveloped countries: these should be the primary objectives of the international organization." (*Recueil des cours, Académie de Droit International, La Haye, 1960, II, pp. 69-70)*

This jurist is today at the head of our Organization.

To be sure, in all continents regional bodies have already embarked on this course of action: in the past year they have contributed, in cooperation with the United Nations, to crucial mediation and peace-keeping ventures - but always after the conflict had flared up. Areas of genuine stability and more reliable regional mechanisms would make it possible to forestall major crises by reducing their causes.

Regional integration indeed can only help contain the collective frustrations and anxieties that fuel nationalist movements. It also provides a formidable incentive for economic growth and therefore a strategic element in combating poverty. Finally, regional economic integration, as it is progressively being built, simply eliminates the option of war from the thinking of the Governments and peoples involved.

The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and its tragic consequences make it all too clear that the comments we have just made relate to a course of action that will prove long and demanding rather than a miracle cure. Neither the European Community nor the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe has been able to prevent the outbreak of the conflict and the subsequent series of disasters. Like the United Nations and the United States of America, the European Community and its member States have consequently been accused of lacking strategy and of indifference. For the European Community and its members, one of the lessons to be learned from this catastrophe is that the deepening of its own internal relations - more Europe rather than less Europe - would strengthen the role it must play as an instrument for promoting stability and peace in Europe and neighbouring areas.

No one can dispute, however, the fact that the European Community and its member States have endeavoured to mediate from the earliest days of the conflict. It was the members of the European Community who, going against the current, managed to persuade the whole Security Council to react to the worsening situation. Without compromising their positions of principle, and despite numerous disappointments, the member States of the Community have at no point wearied of their thankless task.

The efforts deployed at the London and Geneva Conferences bear witness to this. As you are aware, the European Community and its member States have played a fundamental role on the ground, particularly through the activities of their monitors, in the implementation of sanctions and through their contribution to the United Nations Protection Force and to measures to help the victims of the civil war.

The European Community and its member States also reiterate their readiness to participate in the implementation of a peace plan accepted by all the parties.

The Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union should provide us with the means of strengthening the Union's ability to act in the world, in particular by implementing the common foreign and security policy. Once it has entered into force - which should happen in the next few days - that Treaty will enable the European Union to play an enhanced role in all areas of international policy and security and will establish close working relations between the European Union and the Western European Union. Moreover, the imminent enlargement of the European Union to include new members will simply increase its ability to exercise a stabilizing influence over adjacent countries.

The enlargement of the European Union and its readiness to conclude association and cooperation agreements of ever wider scope with virtually all regions and countries of the globe are proof of our sincere desire to forge ahead with the building of Europe while at the same time opening Europe to the world. This is the kind of Europe that is proving increasingly able to serve the objectives of the Charter. It provides encouragement to other countries and regions to unite, to join together, as Europe has done, in the common task of achieving greater peace in tomorrow's world.

Mr. KOZYREV (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: First of all, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to your important post. I see it as a manifestation of respect for the peace-loving policy of Guyana, and as a tribute to the growing role of Latin American and Caribbean countries in international affairs.

Last year demonstrated the great potential for drama inherent in the post-confrontational and post-communist

world. We have seen that the very highest levels of cooperation are achievable. We see truly exciting prospects in yesterday's address by President Bill Clinton of the United States and in other statements already delivered from this rostrum.

At the same time, developments in the former Yugoslavia, Abkhazia and Karabakh have also revealed the true depths of barbarism and the significant new threat of aggressive nationalism.

Outbursts of violence caused by xenophobia, even in traditionally prosperous countries, have shown that no one is safe from this danger. It is no less serious a threat to peace today than nuclear war was yesterday. The world community mustered the strength to stave off the nuclear danger. An important guarantee against this was the Russian-American START II Treaty. Nowadays we all confront the equally formidable challenge of a new generation of conflicts and wars triggered by nationalist, political and religious intolerance. That is why democracy and peacemaking must be the key terms defining the strategy of the world community as it moves into the twenty-first century.

The United Nations is now turning to face this new challenge. The successful United Nations operation in Cambodia was one of the largest in the history of the Organization. Life is returning to normal in a country so long torn by civil war. We stand ready, together with other members of the international community, to help the people of Cambodia to rebuild their country.

We have seen a political and psychological breakthrough in the solution of the key problem of the Middle East settlement, which is the problem of Palestine. We pay tribute to the courageous leaders of Israel and the PLO who have taken the first and most difficult step towards mutual recognition and reconciliation. We are ready to participate in an international conference on the economic development of self-governing Palestinian territories. Russia, as a co-sponsor of the Conference on the Middle East, will spare no effort to advance the peace process in all other areas.

However, the key to the settlement of many conflicts has not yet been found. Russia will continue to encourage the parties to the Bosnian conflict not to lose the chance of a peaceful settlement and will contribute to the operation for its implementation under United Nations command.

Twice during wartime I have had occasion to visit Sarajevo. I propose that the United Nations should place the city under its moral and political protection and that it should be declared a centre of coexistence and a meeting point for Islam, the Orthodox Church, Catholicism and other religions. The city should become a symbol for the whole world, a reminder that political violence and intolerance under the banner of religion are the worst possible crimes against religion itself and the human spirit. In any case, it is surely time to think of establishing closer contacts between the United Nations and the world's leading religions.

The international community seems to have turned a blind eye to Afghanistan and Angola as soon as they ceased to be pawns in the cold war. The United Nations has no right to leave millions of people who live there in the grip of an epidemic of ethnic, clan and religious extremism and to forget their economic and humanitarian problems, including that of the liberation of former Soviet prisoners of war.

We must learn the lessons of the United Nations operation in Somalia and considerably improve its effectiveness. Conscious of its special responsibility for maintaining peace, Russia has made peacemaking and the protection of human rights, particularly those of national minorities, the priority of its foreign policy, first and foremost in the territory of the former USSR.

We will spare no effort to strengthen the Commonwealth of Independent States and make it a positive factor, not only regionally, but globally. I call upon Members of the United Nations to support proposals submitted jointly by the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States to the present session, relating in particular to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the struggle against international terrorism and the protection of the environment.

Our peacemaking efforts are already yielding their first results. For more than a year now there have been no hostilities in the Transdniester region and South Ossetia. With our participation, the process of normalization of the situation and national dialogue has started in Tajikistan.

Russia is making active efforts to put an end to the Abkhazian and Karabakh conflicts and to render humanitarian assistance to their victims.

All these problems are too serious and too tragic for speculation about neo-imperial plans of Russia, diplomatic

rivalry, or the search for new spheres of influence by neighbouring and distant Powers. The United Nations, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), and all States truly interested in peace, along with Russia, will have enough work to do together. We want to see much more active assistance for our peacemaking efforts, not in words, but in deeds.

In most cases this means that the United Nations should give a mandate for operations conducted at the request of conflicting parties on the basis of appropriate agreements. For this, close interaction with the United Nations and the CSCE missions is essential. Also, our minds should be open to non-traditional methods, such as the participation of contingents of the conflicting parties themselves and those of a neighbouring mediating State. The pragmatic nature of such a model was shown in particular in the Transdniester region and in South Ossetia. This model should be used, and not disregarded, in other regions, in the interests of the United Nations, which is facing an overload of peace-keeping operations. The collective peacemaking forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States could also interact with the United Nations itself. It is in any case time to establish closer relations between the two organizations.

In material and financial terms the burden of peacemaking borne by Russia alone today in the territory of the former USSR must be lightened. This could mean establishing a voluntary fund for this purpose. Of course, Russia realizes that no international organization or group of States can replace our peacemaking efforts in this specific post-Soviet area.

By and large, taking into consideration the wide experience gained throughout the world, it is time to think of a modern overall strategy of peacemaking which would be integrated with "An Agenda for Peace" proposed by the Secretary-General.

The Russian Federation, as an initiator of the statement of the President of the Security Council on peacemaking and peace-keeping issues, made on 28 May 1993, makes the following proposals.

The first is to define a clear-cut concept of political leadership by the Security Council, create an effective military command under the supervision of the Secretary-General and establish a procedure for involving, on that basis, regional organizations.

The second is to establish under Article 29 of the United Nations Charter a special Security Council committee on improving peace-keeping operation practices. This could include those States which have already gained considerable experience in this area of United Nations activity.

Our third proposal is to set up United Nations stand-by forces which would be at the disposal of Member States and used in peacemaking operations with the consent of their Governments on a case-by-case basis at the request of the Secretary-General.

All these questions directly relate to the process of renewal of the United Nations. The reform of United Nations bodies, including the Security Council, will make sense and be effective if it allows for a more adequate response to new challenges in the field of peacemaking.

The settlement of conflicts should go hand in hand with the international protection of their victims. As a follow-up to the Geneva International Conference on the Protection of Victims of War, we propose that international legal restrictions be imposed on the use in internal conflicts of the most destructive and indiscriminate types of weapons, primarily military aircraft and artillery-rocket systems. We should also eliminate or call a halt to the use of mercenaries and volunteers both in domestic and international conflicts.

We propose the establishment of a permanent international tribunal to deal with crimes against humanity. The inevitability of punishment will help to prevent the recurrence of such atrocities.

It has become crucially important to address comprehensively the problem of refugees and to specify the relevant principles of international law at a special conference.

Peacemaking cannot be separated from the protection of human rights. The international community is duty-bound to condemn strongly "double" or lower standards of human rights protection, the theory and practice of the superiority of rights of an "indigenous" nation and the creation of mono-ethnic States. The time has come to establish a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Following the example of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, it is time for the United Nations also to have a Special Rapporteur on National Minorities. We support the proposals of the Secretary-General in the field of human rights protection.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would directly contradict the peacemaking efforts of the United Nations. This poses an ever growing threat not only in the future but even at the present. We are ready to cooperate with the United States and other countries in solving the problems connected with cutting off fissionable material production and banning the construction of facilities for such production, particularly in conflict areas.

We are in favour of transforming the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty into a universal agreement of unlimited duration. The United Nations should also work to ensure the universality of and strict compliance with the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Russia reiterates, from this rostrum of the General Assembly, its intention to adhere to the international regime of non-proliferation of missile technology. In the very near future, we intend to take concrete steps to strengthen our relevant domestic legislation, going so far as to envisage criminal prosecution for violations of the rules governing the export of missile equipment and technology. We call on all States that possess such technology to join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). It is also necessary to provide for equality of rights and obligations of the participants, so as to enable them freely to export peaceful space technology.

Successful economic reform is one of the guarantees of peace. This is of particular relevance to the many developing countries and to the post-communist States. Easier access to world markets for countries with transitional economies, including Russia, and the lifting of all discriminatory restrictions is becoming an issue of the highest priority. We believe that the General Assembly should express its support for efforts in this direction. We also propose the establishment of a mechanism to coordinate programmes carried out by the institutions of the United Nations system in support of economic reforms in countries in transition.

The strengthening of democracy is the principal guarantee of security and socio-economic development in the world today. This has been true in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, although the process is not proceeding easily and automatically everywhere. Peoples who have risen up against totalitarianism are threatened by the risk of political violence and ultra-nationalism.

We categorically reject such an alternative. Russia is peacefully transforming itself in accordance with the fundamental principle of democracy: free elections. In 1991, the people of Russia elected their country's first democratic President, and they confirmed their confidence in his policies at the April referendum this year. On the basis of this twofold mandate, the President has taken decisive measures to ensure democratic elections to the Parliament in December of this year. Thus, the old totalitarian system of power will be definitively dismantled and replaced by a new system of power elected by the people and responsible only to the people. We invite international observers to monitor the elections to the Parliament.

In building a new democratic Russia, we of course must first of all rely on our own potential. Yet we very much appreciate the solidarity the democratic community has shown us. Such solidarity is neither an act of interference in our domestic affairs nor the whimsical gesture of romanticists in international politics. It is simply an expression of the human duty to protect the rights of individuals in other countries.

Next month will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Moscow Conference when, in the turbulent year of 1943, the foundation was laid for the establishment of the United Nations, which was conceived as an organization of democratic countries having triumphed over Nazi totalitarianism. Half a century later, the success of democracy in Russia and many other countries has made it possible for the first time to realize fully the lofty destiny of the United Nations and to help it become a truly efficient peacemaking Organization.

We should not allow political short-sightedness, current economic difficulties, egoism and conceit to make us lose the chance to transform the still fragile post-communist world into a democratic one. I hope that this session will move us closer to an understanding of this goal and of the ways of reaching it in the interests of all States and nations.

Mr. HURD (United Kingdom): Mr. President, may I first of all congratulate you on your election, and on the dignified and effective way in which you are already presiding over this Assembly. You have a burdensome job and we wish you all good fortune as you discharge it.

I have sometimes heard speakers from this rostrum patrol the world in their speeches in the general debate, dealing at length with one continent after another. Indeed, I have done so myself in past years. There is much to describe: events in the Middle East and South Africa are particularly encouraging, and developments in Russia, as

we have just heard from Mr. Kozirev, are particularly important. But today it seems to me that in the time available, the focus of interest should not only be on distant events or distant tragedies, but here, in this building, on this institution. Never has there been a time when the United Nations has been so discussed, so misunderstood, so needed.

The international task of this decade is managing disorder. I believe it is possible. But it demands cool heads, low voices, and an understanding of what we can and cannot do. It demands concertation between all countries that take on part of the responsibility for steering the world through channels which are certainly strewn with rocks. This concertation takes place in many forums, but nowhere with greater legal and political authority than here at the United Nations.

We can now see the events of 1989 in their true perspective. They did not usher in a new world order. I think we have to be sober about this. What happened in 1989 was not the birth of a new world order, it was the collapse of one super-Power and the end of communism as a threat to world peace.

The tragedies of the world have continued. Indeed, they have probably increased since 1989. "Tragedy" is a better description than the usual, and overworked, term "crisis", because "crisis" implies a threat to world peace. Now that the cold war is over and super-Powers no longer exert themselves on behalf of clients, it is no longer a crisis in that sense - a threat to world peace - if Sudan, Bosnia, Angola, Liberia, Georgia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Somalia, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and others are racked by civil war. But these are appalling tragedies for those who are killed or driven from their homes, and indeed for all of us, because we are all diminished when the bell tolls.

Some of these tragedies are illuminated by the haphazard light of television. In those cases, millions of our citizens, in all our countries, share feelings of sympathy, indignation and horror. But other tragedies equally foul are played in a darkened theatre: no television, no audience, little pressure. But all these tragedies are a reproach to those of us who are convinced that it is possible slowly and painstakingly to construct a more decent world.

How do we do that? Not, it is clear, by the remaining super-Power using its superiority to impose its own solutions by force. In the 10 tragedies that I listed, the United States has intervened with troops only in one, Somalia - and that now on a reduced scale and under the United Nations - because the United States, quite rightly in my view, is not prepared to send its troops all over the world, as Rome once sent its legions all over Europe, to fight, to pacify and to rule. There are British, French, Spanish and other European troops in Bosnia today under the command of the United Nations. But their role is to save Bosnian lives - they do that daily - implementing United Nations decisions. Likewise, they are not imposing a European *imperium* on that country.

If America and its allies are not to exert themselves as a joint imperial Power, imposing on other countries and sustaining laws and rulers of their choice, then the answer can only lie in reforming and making much better use of the international institutions to which we belong. They were mostly built after the Second World War for one purpose and are now, after the end of the cold war, being hurriedly adapted for another. The British architect Norman Foster has just been given the responsibility of designing in Berlin the new parliament house for a united Germany. If his plans are accepted, he intends to include the old Reichstag building alongside the line of the Berlin Wall in a splendid new structure reaching across the old Wall into East Berlin. There is a parable here for us as well as for Germany.

Inevitably, we have to cope as best we can with what we have. A man, after all, may take some shelter in an unfinished building. I do not believe that an international organization like ours, which is not a colonizing Power, will ever be able to guarantee solutions to civil wars or even to that pernicious variant of a civil war which we see today in Bosnia. But if there are no guarantees of success, the United Nations can be helped greatly to improve on its record. With greater experience, greater resources for preventive action and effectively coordinated humanitarian efforts, it can act before the situation gets out of control and the demand grows for the implementation of sanctions and for peace enforcement.

I hope that within the next few weeks the European Community will move into a new phase of working together on a common foreign and security policy once the Treaty of Maastricht is ratified by all 12 member States. Our President, Willy Claes, the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium, has just illustrated that point. But one of our main aims as European partners must be to support and strengthen the role and the work of the United Nations, for the United Nations is not "them"; it is us, all of us. We have to take responsibility for it and its failures.

If we want the United Nations to work better, it is up to us to give the Secretary-General the support he needs in thoughts, words, deeds and money. I suppose there are few more lonely or more demanding jobs than that of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the present Secretary-General certainly has the misfortune to hold his office in interesting times. He has already given and continues to give a firm and effective lead. He needs and deserves our support.

The United Nations is unique. It alone conveys the word of the international community. Only the United Nations has the legal powers to translate those words into action for the maintenance of world peace. We need, as President Clinton said yesterday, to look at tasks closely, to ensure that they are properly defined and that the resources are there to meet them. We may on occasion have to accept that a mandate should not be given because in reality it cannot be fulfilled.

Let me follow that by looking briefly at the way we carry out peace-keeping operations, the way we deploy preventive diplomacy and the way we run our finances.

Peace-keeping: United Nations blue-helmets are deployed on nearly every continent. We can reel off the statistics, but actually we hear too little of individual soldiers and small detachments. Who knows, for example, of the single military observer in a remote part of Cambodia who found himself not only acting as the local arbiter of family disputes but also providing a local, much appreciated, medical service using a handbook called *When There is No Doctor*, who kept on securing supplies from his wife in Germany and the field hospital in Phnomh Penh for his Khmer community? Or the United Nations military observer who spent his leave in Bangkok fund-raising for a water filter for a remote Cambodian village? Now, they happen to be British, but such servants of the world come from many countries.

We in Britain are committed to our peace-keeping contribution. We now have over 3,300 men and women in blue berets around the world.

In June the Secretary-General asked Member States to identify for him those areas of United Nations peace-keeping operations which needed strengthening and for our ideas on positive steps we could take. I look forward to his report drawing all those responses together.

Useful steps have certainly been taken. There is now a 24-hour operations room, improving the ability of those here in New York to oversee operations around the world. The standby force planning project has been started. A new Department of Peace-keeping Operations is responsible for all United Nations field missions. We can build on these improvements.

Good organization involves clarity and sobriety in setting out our objectives. That means that any operation must have clear and achievable objectives linked to a political process which offers reasonable hope of a solution, and to which all parties should be committed. The mandate should be precise and finite. That means adequate support at Headquarters for planning and reconnaissance missions. It means that the Security Council must resist the temptation to become involved in the detailed conduct of operations. It means the mandate must not create impossible obligations for a force commander on the ground. Once an operation is agreed, command and control relationships could be more clearly defined.

Unity of command at the highest level is essential. Where the United Nations is charged with executing as well as authorizing a peace-keeping operation, all aspects of it should be handled by a single department in New York. That is why we have suggested the creation of an expanded planning and operations staff. This in effect is a general staff for peace-keeping. These men and women, civilian and military, would be able together to provide the necessary core of the United Nations strategic-planning chain. They would operate mainly here in New York, but also in the field. They would provide the United Nations with the nervous system for which its present staff is neither structured nor resourced.

We are not proposing here some new and heavy bureaucracy. On the contrary, we are talking about core staff: trained staff officers, United Nations civil affairs and, increasingly, humanitarian advisers, and chief administrative officers. The example of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), of a special envoy for all humanitarian and refugee aspects of an operation, is good.

Then, there must be flexibility in running peace-keeping operations. The more comprehensive a bureaucracy becomes, the harder it is for it to stay nimble on its feet. Doctrinal and administrative difficulties in working with other international organizations can be overcome. For example, the United Nations is already building valuable links with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and with the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Many peace-keeping and peacemaking operations can be run more effectively by regional organizations or single countries on behalf of the United Nations. That depends on the nature of the problem and on the proposed action agreed by the United Nations. I am thinking, for example, of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Rwanda, and the European Community and NATO in the former Yugoslavia.

Regional organizations can also be asked to help with training. We might look at getting certain nations with well-trained, equipped and available forces to provide the first wave of a peace-keeping force, allowing other nations the time to train and equip their forces to the required standard. A commitment to deploy early would of course need to be matched by a United Nations commitment to agree a firm end-date for the deployment, because exits can be as important as entrances.

What we cannot do, we should not pretend to do. If we play a game of bluff, we can deceive and disappoint others, and sometimes we deceive and disappoint ourselves. Rarely can we attain our ends that way. It is empty to pretend that we can impose peace with justice on every disorder, every dispute, outside our national borders.

But what the United Nations can do, it should do well. Cambodia, for example, is a success story. So was Namibia. Our peace-keepers have been able to limit, though not stop, conflict and to assuage, though not bring to and end, suffering in Bosnia and Somalia. But the authority of the United Nations will suffer if it fails to approach new challenges realistically and flexibly.

However important peace-keeping may be, successful preventive diplomacy would be better. I have just been reading the book published this week by our Australian colleague, the Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans. His new book, *Cooperating for Peace*, brings this point out well and is full of fruitful ideas. Defusing trouble costs a great deal less than a military operation. You can field plenty of emissaries for the price of a battalion. But to be useful, of course, an emissary has to set about his work before the excitement of violence has taken hold.

The Secretary-General has been energetic here. He has sent missions to several areas of tension - to Tajikistan and other regions of the former Soviet Union, to Macedonia, to South Africa and elsewhere.

But in this as in other parts of the United Nations system money is tight. Many missions create an acute need for additional international staff with the necessary skills. I am thinking not just of eminent people, of retired ministers or distinguished ambassadors who can head such missions. The Secretary-General will find them when he needs them. What he needs from Member States is personnel at a more junior level with local experience and negotiating skills.

Now, we have discussed this problem in particular with the French Government, and as an Anglo-French initiative we stand ready to provide the Secretariat with a list of such people, people who have experience in Government service - sometimes outside Government service - and whom we would be prepared to make available for particular missions. We would also be prepared to provide a certain amount of equipment where personnel provided by the United Kingdom were involved. We are ready to respond to the invitation of the Secretary-General in "Agenda for Peace" to provide information crucial to the task of preventive diplomacy. The British and French Governments are both committed to support him in this way, and we hope that others may join in a similar enterprise.

All this work means a financial burden. Of course we should all pay our assessed contribution in full and promptly. We do so. So do most of our European partners, the Nordic countries and those with a long tradition of peace-keeping like Australia and Canada. But others, not entirely or always through their own fault, others who share the heavy burden of international responsibility, do not.

The fact is, the United Nations will always be short of money. Even if everybody pays up in full and on time, the United Nations will still have to choose priorities within the resources available to it. That means - and will always mean - turning down some good causes, and reappraising and sometimes bringing to an end existing commitments.

The United Nations needs to conduct a rigorous scrutiny of what it needs and what it spends. Obviously, it would be able to afford more operations if it ran the existing ones more economically. Without thrift, without financial probity, the authority of the United Nations will weaken and vanish. So we welcome the Secretary-General's recent additional senior appointments at the level of Assistant Secretary-General, covering administrative and financial affairs. We support proposals for a system of

inspection with teeth, which can match more delegated financial authority to the field.

I mention these three areas - peace-keeping, preventive diplomacy and finance. If we can tackle these three areas constructively and vigorously, there is no reason why even under present strains the authority of the United Nations should not grow as strikingly as the burden of expectations now placed upon it. People will always continue to turn to the United Nations, even if they will always expect more of us than is conceivable.

We are discussing, in that context, reform, and we in Britain welcome the debate on Security Council reform. We are discussing positively the enlargement of the Council. This will be complex, as our debate already makes clear, because there are many currents and cross-currents of view.

I do not doubt that if there were to be consensus on enlarging the Security Council there are some countries which, because of their global interests, their contribution to international security, their contribution to United Nations peace-keeping, could undertake the full range of responsibilities of a permanent member and can certainly be expected to do so.

I have concentrated simply on this Organization for the reason which I gave. Few tasks are more important than improving the way the United Nations works if we are to secure a more stable world. We have lived through the events of these last few years. They have been dramatic and exhilarating, they have changed the political and strategic landscape, but they have not removed from us our responsibility to work constructively for a better United Nations. This better world order will not happen because we make a few speeches or pass a few resolutions. It will be constructed steadily, brick by brick, learning always the right lessons from the past, developing steadily our international institutions and our international relations.

It is fair to say that in the last four years, with its ups and downs, we have come a long way, and I believe that, together, we have the will and the wisdom to continue along that road.

Mr. PERES (Israel): I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election to preside over the forty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

We feel strongly that the time has come for all of us - communities, nations, peoples, families - finally to lay the last collective wreath on the tombs of the fallen combatants and on the monuments of our beloved. It is the right way to honour their memories and to answer the needs of the newly born. We have to lay the foundations for a new Middle East.

The peace agreement between us and the Palestinians is not just an accord signed by political leaders. It is an ongoing, profound commitment to the next generation of Arabs and Israelis, Christians, Muslims, Jews and people of all other faiths.

We know it is not enough to declare an end to war. We have to try to eradicate the roots of all hostilities. If we only bring violence down but ignore misery, we may discover that we have traded one menace for another peril.

Territorial disputes may have been the reason for wars between nations, and poverty may again become the seed of violence between peoples. While signing the documents on the lawn of the White House, I could almost sense the breeze of a fresh spring, and my imagination began to wander to the skies of our land, which may have become brighter to the eyes of all people, both those who agree and those who oppose. On the lawn one could almost hear the heavy tread of boots leaving the stage after a hundred years of hostility. One could have heard the gentle tiptoeing of new steps making a debut in a world awaiting peace.

Yet we could not depart from reality. I know that the solution to the Palestinian issue may be the key to a new beginning, but it is in no way the answer to the many needs awaiting us upon our return home.

The last decade saw great changes, including the end of East-West confrontation and the opening of the way for the gradual disappearance of North-South polarization. The great continent of Asia and the picturesque continent of South America introduced the dynamics of an economic development of their own. The dramatic event in South Africa is a declaration to the same effect. So, contrary to all assumptions, it has been demonstrated that neither geography nor race is a hindrance or an advantage to economic promise.

We witnessed the end of some wars only to discover that the warriors did not reach their own promised land. Some colonized people gained their independence, but they hardly enjoyed its fruits. The dangers may have been over,

but their hopes evaporated. We have learned that the end of a war should be the beginning of a new genesis, which will be the end of belligerency and will put an end to psychological prejudices.

No nation, rich or poor, is able nowadays to attain security unless the region in which it exists is secure. The scope of regional security must exceed the range of ballistic missiles, which may hit each and all of us.

As we strive to achieve a comprehensive peace, no wound must remain unhealed.

Geographically speaking, we live side by side with the Jordanian Kingdom, and what is so obvious geographically must become clear politically. We have already agreed with the Hashemite Kingdom on many complicated issues, and there is no doubt that we can complete the story fully, that we can offer the people on both sides of the river full peace, that the Dead Sea can become a spring of new life and that the old waters of the River Jordan can be a source of prosperity flowing from each side to the other.

We hope - as a matter of fact, we are determined - to make peace with Syria, yet we ask the Syrian leadership, if it has chosen peace, why it refuses to meet openly. If Syria is aiming for the Egyptian fruits of peace, it must follow the process that led to them. Both of us have to look ahead and realize that the threats of war are no more than an illusion that one can return to an unbearable past.

We shall not give up our negotiations with our Lebanese neighbours. We do not have any territorial claims or any political pretensions concerning Lebanon. We pray, together with many Lebanese, that their country will no longer be a back yard for troublemakers. It is for Lebanon to make a choice between Hizbollah, on the one hand, which operates from its territory and then takes orders from another Government, and, on the other, insisting on having one army, one policy, and offering real tranquillity to its people and security to its neighbours. Lebanon does not need a license to regain its independence, and Lebanon should not postpone its return to its balanced, traditional policy.

I am not sure whether there is a new order in the world, but all of us feel there is a new world awaiting an order. We are encouraged by the new attempt of the United Nations and its Secretary-General to answer the social and economic call of the present era. The United Nations was created as a political answer; today it must face social and economic questions.

The Middle East, which has been an important agenda item in United Nations history, must become prosperous, not only peaceful. To construct a modern Middle East we need wisdom no less than financial support.

We have to rid ourselves of the costly follies of the past and adopt the principles of modern economy. Who will, and who should, pay the cost of oversized armies? Who will, and who should, bear the price of an arms race whose cost has reached $50 billion annually? Who will, and who should, pay for the inefficiencies of old systems? Who will, and who should, compensate for outmoded censorship of mail and control of trade and travel? And who will comply with the State where suspicion intercepts the enterprising spirit of the people?

We can, and we should, turn to the promises of scientific development, the market economy and comprehensive education. We must base our industry, agriculture and services on the highest of today's technologies. We have to invest in our schools. Israel, a country of immigration, is blessed with many scientists and engineers. We shall gladly make this human wealth available as a contribution.

I know that there is suspicion; that, when referring to a common market in the Middle East or announcing an Israeli contribution, it may be perceived as an attempt to win preference or to establish domination. May I say sincerely and loudly that we did not give up territorial control to engage ourselves in economic superiority. The age of domination, political or economic, is dead. The time of cooperation has begun.

As a Jew, may I say that the virtue and the essence of our history since the times of Abraham and the commandments of Moses have been an uncompromising opposition to any form of occupation, domination and discrimination. For us, Israel is not just a territorial homeland, but a permanent moral commitment as well. There are other questions, concerning the building of a common market in the Middle East, as to how to attain this when governments are so varied and economies are so different. The differences in governments and economies should not prevent us from doing together what can be done together: combating the desert and offering fertility to an arid land.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations declared that the Middle East must double its agricultural production in the 25 years to come. The population of the region in the same period will double

itself anyway. The land is cut by many and large deserts and its water resources are stingy and scarce. Yet we know that in a similar period of time - the 25 years between 1950 and 1975 - Israel was able to increase its agricultural output twelvefold - an increase unprecedented in history.

During the past decade, 95 per cent of the growth of our agriculture resulted from research, planning, training and organizing. High technology permits nations to attain real independence and to experience genuine freedom, political as well as economic. There is nothing new about the scarcity of water in our midst. Jacob and Esau drank from the same wells even when their paths were separated. But then, unlike today, they could not desalinate the sea water; they could not computerize irrigation; nor could they enjoy the potential of biotechnology.

We are meeting again with an entirely different opportunity. Greening the land can be accompanied by the creation of many new jobs for all people in the area. The most promising opportunity may be the development of tourism. No other branch of modern industry assures an immediate growth of the Middle East like this one. Our area is blessed by nature and by history, a history which is still very much alive: the eternity of Jerusalem, the magnificence of the pyramids, the symbols of Luxor, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Pillars of Wisdom in Baalbek, the red palaces of Petra, the inimitable charm of Marakesh, the old winds which still blow in Carthage, not forgetting the beaches of Gaza or the scent of Jericho's perfumed fruits. We have to open roads to those wonders and keep them safe and hospitable. Tourism depends on tranquility; tourism enhances tranquillity. It makes friendship a vested interest.

Thirdly, we have to build an infrastructure with modern means so as to avoid the pitfalls of the past. Modern transportation and revolutionary communications crossing the air, covering the ground and connecting the seas will turn geographical proximities into an economic advantage. We should not ask taxpayers of other countries to finance follies of our own. We have to correct them ourselves. We do not have the moral right to ask for the financing of unnecessary wars or wasteful systems.

If the thumping of hammers replaces the thunder of guns, many nations will be more than willing to extend a helping hand. They will invest in a better future. They will support the replacement of unwarranted confrontation with much-needed economic competition. Markets can serve the needs of the people no less than flags can signify their destinies. The time has come to build a Middle East for the people and not just for the rulers.

It was not simple to open the locked doors to peace. In the name of God, let them not be closed again. Let peace be comprehensive, embracing all issues, all countries, all generations. We suggest that we all negotiate together as equals. We offer a common ground of mutual respect and mutual compromise. Thirteen years have passed since we made peace with Egypt. We are grateful to Egypt and its President for expanding understanding, overt and hidden. In a world in which so many insoluble problems reside, the Palestinians and we have finally shown that in fact there are no insoluble problems, only people who tend to believe that many problems are insoluble.

We have negotiated one of the most complicated issues of the last 100 years. We are grateful to the United States for its support and leadership. We are grateful to both President Clinton and Secretary Christopher for their crucial role. We appreciate the Egyptian role and the Norwegian encouragement; the European involvement and serious contribution; the Asian support and blessing. Maybe we now have the right to say to other people in conflict: "Do not give up. Do not surrender to old obsessions and do not take fresh disappointments at face value." What we did, others can do as well.

We are determined to make the agreement with the Palestinians into a permanent success. Israel would consider the economic success of the Palestinians as though it were its own, and I believe that a newly achieved security will serve the aspirations of the Israelis and the necessities of the Palestinians.

Gaza, after 7,000 years of suffering, can emancipate itself from want. Jericho, without its fallen walls, can see its gardens blossom again.

As the twentieth century comes to a close, we have learned from the United States and Russia that there are no military answers to the new military dangers, only political solutions. Successful economies are no longer a monopoly of the rich and the mighty. They represent an open invitation to every nation ready to adopt the combination of science and open-mindedness. We see at the end of this century that politics can achieve more by good will than by power, and that the young generation watching their televisions compare their lot with the fortunes or misfortunes of others. They see freedom, they watch

peace, they view prosperity, all in real time. They know that they can attain more if they work harder.

If we want to represent their hopes, we have to combine wise policies and regional security with market economies. Historically we were born equal, and equally we can give birth to a new age.

> "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt." *(The Holy Bible, Amos 9:13)*

So said the Prophet.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.